

- Conference Report includes Kennedy-Hall Amendment to Provide More Resources for Teachers in Inclusive Classrooms -

Washington, DC – Today the House of Representatives passed by a strong bipartisan vote of 381 to 36 the House-Senate Conference Report on the Head Start for School Readiness Act, legislation that includes an amendment offered by Congressmen Patrick Kennedy (RI-1) and John Hall (NY-19). The Kennedy-Hall amendment would provide more federal resources to “inclusive” Head Start classrooms, which are classrooms that include both children with disabilities and children without disabilities. It would also make certain funds in the bill available to increase the understanding of the impact of Head Start services delivered in inclusive classrooms on both children with and without disabilities and to assist Head Start programs in improving the quality of inclusive classrooms.

“Although inclusive classrooms with both children with and without disabilities can provide increased educational benefits for all kids involved, they also present teachers and staff with increased demands,” said Hall, a former School Board President. “As we have seen with other key educational programs, like those under No Child Left Behind, teachers and staff have often been forced to try to handle greater responsibilities without the necessary resources.”

“The amendment I offered with Congressman Kennedy would help to bridge that gap and allow Head Start professionals to pursue the benefit of inclusive education by allowing training and technical assistance funds to be spent to enhance the ability of classroom staff to meet the needs of eligible children inclusive classrooms,” Hall continued. “By providing more resources for teacher training and support, the Kennedy-Hall amendment will make great strides in improving the quality of the educational experience for all children in a class.”

The Kennedy-Hall amendment passed as part of the Conference Report on H.R. 1429, the Head Start for School Readiness Act, legislation that reauthorizes and improves the successful Head Start early childhood education program for five years. Head Start is a highly successful, comprehensive child development and early education program for low-income children and their families. The Senate is expected to pass the Conference Report later this week. The legislation would then move to the President's desk for his signature before becoming public law.

“This is a strong, vital bill that will expand access to Head Start for thousands of children and give teachers and staff more resources to help make sure that America’s less well off children can hit the ground running and have a great chance of long-term success when they arrive in school,” said Hall. “Head Start is rooted in the belief that all of our children have a contribution to make, and the right to a fair shot at success in their lives. The students in Head Start classrooms deserve nothing less than the highest quality pre-kindergarten services possible, and the teachers and staff that help to build their lives need our full support.”

The Head Start for School Readiness Act:

- Provides tens of thousands more children with access to Head Start services
- Increases funding for teacher and staff salaries and professional development

- Makes critical improvements to Head Start programs to ensure children are ready for school
- Improves coordination between Head Start and state and local early education and pre-k programs to make programs more efficient and effective,
- Increases accountability by strengthening monitoring and funding penalties for Head Start centers.

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